

The Life Triumphant

By LOUIS F. WERE



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“Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to *triumph in Christ.*”—2 Cor. 2: 14.

- (1) THE POSSIBILITY
- (2) THE NECESSITY
- (3) THE DIFFICULTY
- (4) THE MANNER OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

(1) THE POSSIBILITY.

Is it possible? What others have done you, also, *can* do. Our Lord's clear note of triumph comes ringing across the centuries: "I have overcome the world." John 16: 33. He makes this declaration as part of His message of encouragement to us: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Because He overcame the world we, too, are assured of victory through Him. At the end of his life, the apostle Paul declared: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith." 2 Tim. 4:7. Throughout his epistles we read the assurances of victory: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I Cor. 15: 57. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." 2 Cor. 2: 14. "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in [for, margin] Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places. And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." Phil. 1: 12-14. By reading Paul's account of the number of times he was subjected to conditions of peril, pain and humiliation one might be led to think that Paul was often defeated and surely feeling dejected. But, no, Paul did not regard reproach and humiliation as defeat. Like a strong eagle that flies through and above the storms into the calm sunshine, Paul's spirit rose above earthly difficulties into the Divine Presence. He sublimated his experiences of difficulties to the glory of the Lord. He accepted whatever came to him as from God, for he knew that Christ had power to prevent them, and he knew that strength would be supplied him to meet and overcome the difficulties. He declared: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." 2 Cor. 12: 9, 10. Paul's triumphant life and service assures all those who seek the life triumphant that it is a glorious possibility.

(2) THE NECESSITY.

Perhaps the saddest pictures presented in the Scriptures are those which depict the final rejection by the Lord of those who were satisfied that they would meet with the Lord's approval and enter into glory. On more than one occasion the Lord solemnly stated: "For many are called, but few are chosen." Matt. 20: 16; 22: 14. "*Few* are chosen." "*Many*" professing Christians will be rejected. "*Many* will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. 7: 22, 23. These verses, in harmony with others, clearly show that there is a standard to be met as a test of eternal fellowship with God. It is not an impossible standard, for God would not ask for impossibilities. It is a possibility and it is also a necessity. "*Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*" Heb. 12: 14.

To-day there is not the same emphasis upon the theme of fitness for heaven as was done among earlier Christians. The Bible does not teach that there is a purgatory through which souls pass for purification on the way to the infinitely-pure presence of God. The Bible plainly declares that holiness must be obtained *now* in this life as a preparation for living in the unsullied realms of eternal bliss. Writing upon the subject of Righteousness by Faith, one well-known writer says: "The righteousness by which we are *justified* is *imputed*. The righteousness by which we are *sanctified* is *imparted*. The first is our *title to heaven*; the second is our *fitness for heaven*." Imparted righteousness sanctifies the life conduct and provides "*our fitness for heaven*." This same godly writer lamented "that many were neglecting the *preparation* so needful, and were looking to the time of 'refreshing' and the 'latter rain' to *fit* them to stand in the day of the Lord, and to live in His sight. . . . Let us all remember that God is holy, and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence."

That power to overcome is available to the believer is evident by the fact that all of the glorious promises the Lord Jesus gives to the church in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, are specifically declared to be for him "*that overcometh*." See Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3: 5, 12, 21. The promises of eternal inheritance are not for those who merely "believe," but for those whose faith claims the Saviour's abiding presence day by day, and who thus learn to "overcome" inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil.

"Are There Few That Be Saved?"

This question was asked our Lord by one who had been impressed by the Master's imperative call for a life of holiness.

To meet the need of the human heart to be warned against spiritual indolence, Jesus replied: "*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate; for *many*, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Luke 13: 23, 24. "*Many . . . will seek . . . and shall not be able.*" This is not written of unbelievers, but of those who desire to live in heaven and to dwell forevermore in the presence of God. They "*seek*" but are not "*able*" to enter heaven. They do not have that perfection of character God requires of those who will be citizens of His eternal kingdom. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Matt. 5: 8. As all are born with hearts at variance with the purpose of God (see Rom. 3: 23; 8: 7; Jer. 17: 9), it is obvious that those who eventually are "*accounted worthy*" (Luke 21: 36) must go through a school of discipline in order to obtain the necessary fitness for heaven. That that school of discipline is not an easy one is revealed by the Master's use of the word "*strive*." In the original, the word, from which we obtain our word "*agonize*," suggests an intensity of purpose. Evil can be overcome only by diligent, constant and persevering acceptance of Divine aid. Jesus says: "If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow Me." Luke 9: 23. The "*many*" who "*seek*" to enter into heaven but yet who fail have not fully united with Christ in a life of self-denial; they have not "*daily*" taken up their cross and followed the Lord along "*the narrow way*."

The Lord admonishes us: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and *many* there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and *narrow* is the way, which leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it." Matt. 7: 13, 14. Well might we all ponder prayerfully over the inspired words: "And if the *righteous scarcely be saved*, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Pet. 4: 18. In this same epistle, the apostle Peter reminds us that from the multitudes living in the days of Noah only a "*few*" availed themselves of the opportunity of co-operating with the Lord in their own salvation. He says: "The long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein *few*, that is, eight souls were saved by water." 1 Pet. 3: 19. "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matt. 24: 37-39. To-day, also, "the Lord . . . is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come." 2 Pet. 3: 9, 10. To-day there are "*multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision*." Joel 3: 13. But, as in the days of Noah, "*many neglect so great salvation*" (Heb. 2: 3), and, by entertaining shallow thoughts concerning their personal salvation, fail to attain to the standard of holiness required for entrance into that fair land where the pollutions of sin cannot enter.

(3) THE DIFFICULTY.

While our Lord often encouraged His disciples by assuring them victory through Him yet, nevertheless, He also often solemnly spoke of the difficulties they would meet. He set forth the perils they would face, the power of the tempter, the strength and enmity of the world, their own human weakness, and the necessity of faith, courage and trust in Him in the face of adversities. Many who commence to follow the Lord are discouraged and turn from following Him when they meet with unexpected trial and difficulty. It is necessary that those who have just accepted Christ as Lord know somewhat of the things that will come to test their steadfastness. To Timothy Paul wrote: "Thou therefore *endure hardness*, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." 2 Tim. 2: 3. Pointing to these days, Jesus said: "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall *endure unto the end*, the same shall be saved." Matt. 24: 13, 14. "*Endure unto the end*"—in these words Jesus warns us of the difficulties we are sure to meet all along "the narrow way" and the necessity for us to continue steadfast in His strength. In His parable of the sowing of the seed, our Lord says: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but *dureth for a while*: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." Matt. 13: 20, 21.

To His followers, Jesus says: "In the world *ye shall have tribulation*: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16: 33. The believer is not called to live in a nursery but to fight in a battlefield. We are to "*war a good warfare*"; to "*fight*" the good fight of faith. 1 Tim. 1: 18; 6: 12. Victory, however, is assured to all who will closely follow the Lord in the great battle of life.

All who eventually reign with Christ in glory will have experienced the strength of the evil which they inherited by their natural birth. "*Ye must be born again*" declared Jesus to Nicodemus, the apparently good churchman who sought an interview with Him privately. John 3: 1-7. God requires more than mere outward conformity to human standards; more than a righteousness based upon social ethics. The Law of God covers the thoughts and motives, and these can be purified and controlled only by Divine power. Man "*MUST*"—it is a Divine imperative—he controlled by God: we must bring "*into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*." 2 Cor. 10: 5. It is not a matter of whitewashing the pump but of cleaning the well. The springs of human thought and action must be cleaned, and kept clean by the power of God dwelling within.

The impossibility of any human being unaided by Heaven attaining to the righteousness required by God is abundantly illustrated throughout the Scriptures. This is not done to discourage man, but is done to point out that only in Christ can righteousness be obtained and retained. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jer. 13: 23. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jer. 17: 9. "For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord God." Jer. 2: 22.

The impossibility of the unaided human heart reaching the divine standard is illustrated in the experiences of Paul. Until he learned the secret of victory through the indwelling Spirit of God, he lamented: "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I . . . it is no more I that do it, but sin dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 7: 14-25.

(4) THE MANNER OF ACCOMPLISHMENT.

"He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David." Zech. 12: 8. This encouraging promise of victory assures all who receive "the spirit of grace and supplications" that as youthful, inexperienced David defeated Goliath, and other enemies, in the strength of God so would they also be conquerors over their foes. "He that is feeble" can be made strong enough to overcome every enemy. In the words of the hymn:

"I am satisfied to know
That *with Jesus* here below
I can conquer every foe."

The secret of victory is in the words "*with Jesus*," or, as stated by another hymn writer: ". . . I *triumph* still if *Thou abide with me*." In Scripture, He is known as "The Strength [margin, Victory] of Israel." 1 Sam. 15: 29. When Jesus reigns within the heart He provides the strength for victory. "Be strong *in the Lord*, and in the power of *His might*." Ephes. 6: 10. Previously in this

epistle Paul urged all to "be *filled* with the Spirit." Ephes. 5: 18. The Spirit-filled life is one of victory and this experience is possible to all who will fully co-operate with God in their own salvation. "... *strengthened with might by His Spirit* in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by *faith*." Ephes. 3: 16, 17. Christ commissions His Spirit to empower those who exercise faith. "For whatsoever is born of God *overcometh* the world: and this is the victory that *overcometh* the world, even our *faith*." 1 John 5: 4, 5.

Before Joshua led the Israelites in their conquest of the city of Jericho, he said: "Shout for the Lord *hath given* you the city." Josh. 6: 16. It is the believer's privilege to claim victory *before the battle begins*. When the combined forces of the enemies of the people came against Israel in the days of Jehoshaphat, the Lord said: "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you . . . fear not, nor be dismayed. . . . And *when they began to sing and praise, the Lord* set ambushments against" their enemies. 2 Chron. 20: 17-24. The overthrow of their mighty foes was due to God's intervention on behalf of His *trusting* people. Victory comes "not by might, nor by power, *but by My Spirit*, saith the Lord of hosts." Zech. 4: 6. The promise is certain: "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the *Spirit of the Lord* shall lift up a standard against him," or, as stated in the margin, "put him to flight." Isa. 59: 19. "*The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities . . . the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" Rom. 8: 26. God "shall also quicken your mortal bodies by *His Spirit that dwelleth in you*." Rom. 8: 14. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty*. But we all . . . are *changed* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by *the Spirit of the Lord*." 2 Cor. 3: 17, 18.

Victory is achieved through the indwelling Spirit of God. It was the Spirit of God Who possessed Othniel (Judg. 3: 10), Samson (Judg. 13: 25), Saul (1 Sam. 11: 6), etc., to do their mighty exploits for God. "The people that do know their God *shall be strong, and do exploits*." Dan. 11: 32. By faith Jonathan, with one sword, put the powerful Philistines to flight. God honoured his faith and wrought mightily for Israel. See 1 Sam. 13: 22; 14: 1-23. Those are assured of victory who pray as did Asa: "Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, *or with them that have no power*: help us, O Lord our God; for *we rest on Thee*, and in Thy name we go against this multitude . . . So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa." 2 Chron. 14: 11, 12. Jehoshaphat's victory came after he prayed: "*We have no might* against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: *but our eyes are upon Thee*." 2

Chron. 20: 12. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ear is open unto their cry. . . . The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. . . . *None of them that trust in Thee shall be desolate.*" Ps. 34: 6, 15-22.

"The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord." Isa. 59: 20. "He will have compassion upon us; *He will subdue our iniquities.*" Micah 7: 19. "For this is My covenant unto them, *when I shall take away their sins.*" Rom. 11: 27. "A new heart also *will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes.*" Ezek. 36: 26, 27. The basis of the Old Covenant was the thrice-repeated promise of the people: "All the words which the Lord hath said *will we do.*" Ex. 19: 8; 24: 3, 7. That Old Covenant was faulty because it depended upon the weaknesses of human flesh to fulfill the Divine requirements. The New Covenant is certain of fulfilment because it rests upon God's seven-times repeated "*I will.*" See Heb. 8: 6-12. How satisfying, how restful the knowledge that victory depends upon the promises of an Almighty God. The Lord asks us to remind Him of His promises: "Put Me in remembrance," Isa. 43: 26. He invites us to remind Him of His word because He knows that only as humble suppliants who acknowledge their utter weakness and inability to be victorious and who thus throw themselves upon Divine power can victory be obtained. Victory will come to those who from the heart cry to God, "Help of the helpless, Oh, abide with me."

To the Apostle Paul the Lord said: "My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12: 9. Paul declared: "For when I am weak, then am I strong." v. 10. Human self-reliance, self-sufficiency hinders growth in spiritual strength. Peter's denial of Christ followed his proud assertion that though all men forsook the Lord he would remain faithful. Mark 14: 29-31. The Lord sought gently to shake Peter's confidence in himself. Luke 22: 31-34. Peter grew in strength after he was brought to see that he needed to depend wholly upon God every moment of every day. Paul wrote: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves . . . but *our sufficiency is of God.*" 2 Cor. 3: 5.

Looking Unto Jesus.

Everything depends upon the Saviour. His name, Jesus, was given to Him by God because "He shall save His people from their sins." Matt. 1: 21. The mind must be trained to think upon Him

constantly. He says: "*Look unto Me, and be ye saved*, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Isa. 45: 22. This does not merely refer to looking unto Jesus in the commencement of the Christian life, but refers to a daily and hourly experience. The apostle Paul, whose victorious life has been a source of encouragement to many, tells us the secret of victory: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus* the Author [margin, *Beginner*] and *Finisher* of our faith." Heb. 12: 1, 2. Christians are running in the race every day and every moment of the day, and they need to look unto Jesus not only at the beginning but all through the race until the finish. Jesus is "the *Beginner* and *Finisher* of our faith." He declares: "I am *with you alway*, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28: 20. The earnest Christian ever seeks the Presence of Christ as did Moses when he said unto the Lord, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Ex. 33: 15. The believer must cultivate the sense of the Master's presence. With inspired pen David wrote: "I have set the *Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand*, I shall not be moved." Ps. 16: 8. Out of the wealth of his own experience Paul wrote to the Philippians: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath *begun* a good work in you will perform [margin, *will finish* it] until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1: 6. Having once led a soul to serve Him, the Lord will employ every agency for the completion of the work He has so gloriously begun in the believer. If the believer will co-operate with the Saviour victory is assured. "Wherefore, my beloved . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is *God which worketh in you* both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil. 2: 12, 13. In that wonderful booklet, "Steps to Christ," the pathway of Christian living has been made simple and yet grand. On page 52 the author speaks of the part the individual can play in co-operating the will with Divine power: "What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him. . . . Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith."

When the disciples heard Jesus' teaching on the test for entrance into heaven "they were exceedingly amazed, saying, *Who then can be saved?* But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, *With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.*" Matt. 19: 23-26. "With God." The Christian walk is a companionship with God. "Truly *our fellowship*" is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1: 3. "Day and night He will lead you right. *Never lose sight of Jesus.*"

A Study of the Scriptures Necessary for the Victorious Life.

A well-known writer has stated: "That perfection of character He [God] requires can be obtained only by becoming familiar with His Word." "Counsels to Teachers," p. 455. God has ordained that by prayer and the study of His Word we shall be "changed . . . from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3: 18. As the Word of God is the "seed" which, with operation of the Holy Spirit, generates the new life (1 Pet. 1: 23), that life is revived and strengthened as often as the Word of God is read and received into the soul. 1 Thess. 2: 13. "Man shall not *live* by bread alone, but by *every* Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matt. 4: 4. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. 10: 17. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed [*"the germ of life,"* Weymouth] remaineth in him." 1 John 3: 9. "A divine element combines with the human when the soul reaches out after God." "Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing," p. 35. The Christian is admonished: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Pet. 3: 18. Christian growth depends upon a study of the Word of God: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, *that ye may grow thereby.*" 1 Pet. 2: 2. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word." Ps. 119: 9. "They received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures *daily.*" Acts 17: 11.

The Victorious Life Possible Through Prayer.

Without prayer the victorious life is an utter impossibility. The darkness of Satan surrounds those who do not pray. Prayer is one of the main channels of blessing from God to man. The Christian life is one long prayer. Paul admonishes us to "pray without ceasing." 1 Thess. 5: 17. This is not a loose, exaggerated statement, but an earnest appraisal of the need of those who seek to do the will of God. Man cannot store up Divine power and then become independent of God for a period of time. After having created the worlds by His almighty power, the Creator continues to watch over His creation and to sustain it every moment. Heb. 1: 3; Neh. 9: 6; etc. Under the figure of "a vineyard" God assures His people of His care of them: "I the Lord do keep it; I will water

it every moment: lest any hurt it, *I will keep it night and day.*" Isa. 27: 3. God's kingdom is based upon love, and force cannot enter into service for God. God will not force His will upon us, but He will instantly answer an earnest request for His help. God plans that through prayer we shall receive blessings which we would not obtain without asking. We are urged to ask and we are assured that our prayers will be answered: "Ask, and it shall be given you . . . how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Luke 11:13. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." John 14: 13, 14. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given to him." James 1: 5. "And this is the confidence we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us." 1 John 5: 14. The greatest power of the enemy can be overcome through faith and determined prayer. See Matt. 17: 14-21.

Obedience and Greater Blessings Through Prayer.

Having commenced to walk in harmony with the will of God, the Spirit of God leads into a closer walk with God. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess. 4:3: "Elect . . . through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience. . . . As obedient children. . . . But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." 1 Pet. 1: 2, 14, 15. The sincere soul seeks to walk in the ways of God with "a *constant* spirit" (Ps. 51: 10, margin), and to keep "the first Commandment: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.*'" Mark 12: 30. This high standard can be achieved only through determination (1 Cor. 2: 2) and continued effort, trusting ever in the power and presence of God. After having passed through a school of discipline and having met with the Lord's approval, the obedient child of God may expect greater answers to prayers. "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." 1 John 3: 22. "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Acts 1: 8. "The Holy Ghost Whom God hath given to *them that obey Him.*" Acts 5: 32. As the disciple is tested in various ways but "continually" serves the Lord (Dan. 6: 16, 20), so the walk with God becomes more and more intimate, the soul goes on "from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3: 18), until it is realised that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5: 16. All those who wrestle in prayer with God, as did Jacob, will have the joyful, triumphant experience of knowing that they have "power with God and with men." Gen. 32: 28; Hos. 12: 3, 4.

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LOUIS F. WERE,

Box 363 F., G.P.O., Melbourne, Victoria.